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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BERLIN 000325

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TAGS: [GM](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [NATO](#) [PREL](#) [IO](#) [EUN](#)

SUBJECT: CURRENT GERMAN ENGAGEMENT IN IRAQ: SMALL, STEADY,
AND SLIGHTLY INCREASING

REF: 07 BERLIN 1994

Classified By: DCM JOHN KOENIG. REASONS: 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (SBU) Summary: German engagement in Iraq remains small, but there are a few improvements of note. The opening of a new office in Erbil, revived and additional training programs, and participation in multi-lateral forums demonstrate that Germany is quietly investigating ways to increase its engagement. While German coalition government dynamics may limit Germany's ability to enact bold changes, officials here are at least considering opportunities to increase operations in Iraq. This cable provides a roundup of German involvement. Septel will provide Embassy views on areas where we may be able to push Germany to do more. End Summary.

German Engagement Increases With Erbil Office

¶2. (C) In a conversation with PolOff on March 4, Dr. Ruediger Lotz, head of the MFA's Iraq Unit, noted that in the coming months, Germany will open an embassy branch office in Erbil to interact more closely with the Kurdish Regional Government. During its initial months, according to Lotz, the office will only be partially staffed utilizing employees from their embassy in Baghdad, with an eye toward increasing staffing patterns to provide permanent representation in Erbil. The decision was also recently made to open a German/Kurdish "cultural house" -- most likely also in Erbil -- in recognition of that region's potential and the number of Iraqi Kurds living in Germany. On the economic front, the German Chamber of Commerce (DIHK) continues to assist German companies interested in investing in Iraq through their office in Amman, Jordan.

¶3. (C) Since 2003, Lotz noted, Germany has provided over 267 million Euros in financial assistance and other programs that benefit Iraq. In 2007 the German MFA provided roughly four million Euros to the UNHCR and the ICRC to assist Iraqi refugees, and the German Development Ministry (BMZ) provided another four million Euros to build schools and infrastructure projects for Iraqi refugees living in Syria. (NOTE: The refugee issue is a particularly sensitive one since the number of Iraqi illegal immigrants arrested in Germany more than doubled last year, Lotz said. END NOTE.) He also noted that Germany forgave 4.3 billion Euros in Iraqi debt in 2005 and continues to examine ways to provide financial assistance to the Iraqi government.

¶4. (SBU) As reported in REFTEL, after a two-year disruption, Germany resumed training of Iraqi armed forces in cooperation with the United Arab Emirates earlier this year. The

Bundeswehr is training an Iraqi logistics and support battalion of 800 soldiers in the UAE and providing equipment worth 7.5 million Euros. Lotz expressed satisfaction that this program was able to restart once Iraq's portion of the transportation funding was secured.

"Small Successes" Target Training and "Neighbors"

15. (C) Lotz also mentioned "small successes" in the expanded German assistance program. After "months of negotiations" Jordan has agreed to serve as host country for a small German-funded program costing 600,000 Euros to train police officers (eight Iraqi and eight Jordanian) in detecting and disarming bombs and other explosive devices. This training should begin in the coming months and, while admittedly small, if successful should be expanded next year. Germany will also renew its project to provide a two-week training course for parliamentary administrative staffers and a six week training course for twelve Iraqi diplomats -- programs which were widely lauded by contacts with the Iraqi embassy in Berlin. The German-language "Goethe Institute" will also begin bringing approximately 80 Iraqis to Jordan and Egypt for six months of intensive German language training, followed by internships with companies in Germany which are interested in investing in Iraq lasting an additional four months.

16. (C) Germany is also looking at ways to be more active and supportive in the Neighbors' Meetings, the diplomatic initiative which brings Iraq and neighboring countries together with members of the international community. Lotz mentioned that the process "feels right and seems to be a

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good start" to address issues and coordinate responses. He also noted that the Koerber Foundation, an independent German think tank, recently organized a conference in Damascus, Syria on February 22-24 on the implications of the war on regional stability. German Parliamentarians Rolf Muetzenich (SPD) and Elke Hoff (FDP) participated, together with MFA Middle East Commissioner Andreas Michaelis, Deputy Head of the MFA Planning Staff Ralph Tarraf, MOD Planning Staff Chief Ulrich Schlie and former Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer. While the discussion did not focus specifically on the German role in Iraq, participants from the Middle East reportedly called for increased engagement from Germany and other European nations, arguing that Europe as a whole needs to be more visible and active to complement (and, as some participants apparently noted, to counter) U.S.-led efforts.

17. (C) Noting that the EU also hopes to increase operations on the ground in Iraq, Lotz mentioned the active German support for the EUJUST-LEX program (at a cost of some 900,000 Euros to date) which provides quarterly training opportunities for Iraqi judges and prosecutors for four weeks each. Lotz went on to state that the European Parliament has been discussing new and creative ways to expand their presence throughout Iraq, and mentioned Basra in the south and Erbil in the north as examples of areas where more could be done. Without mentioning further details, Lotz said additional programs in the justice, financial reform, health, education and human rights areas were all being debated in Brussels and Strasbourg.

18. (C) COMMENT: The climate in the Grand Coalition of the CDU/CSU and the SPD parties is increasingly fragile, making any advancement in Germany's policy toward Iraq a real challenge. Still, on the margins, Post believes the slight shift in German views could allow for some forward movement and increased German engagement in Iraq (see SEPTEL). END COMMENT.

TIMKEN JR